

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LUSAKA 01179 291716Z
ACTION SS-25

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P 291538Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5548

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

S E C R E T LUSAKA 1179

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGY: PFOR ZA CG

SUBJ: ZAIRIAN, ZAMBIAN RELATIONS: BOMBING INCIDENT

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT KAUNDA HAS ASKED THAT MOBUTU PUBLICLY
RETRACT HIS CHARGE THAT CUBA AND USSR WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR
BOMBING ZAMBIAN TERRITORY. ZAIRIAN EMBASSY SEES THIS DEMAND
LEADING TO DETERIORATION IN ZAMBIA-ZAIRE RELATIONS AND ADMITS
THAT BOMBING MAY HAVE BEEN DELIBERATE. WE WOULD HOPE A FACE
SAVING FORMULA COULD BE FOUND WHICH WILL HALT DETERIORATION.
END SUMMARY.

1. DCM OF ZAIRIAN EMBASSY HAS GIVEN US A RUNDOWN ON ZAMBIAN-
ZAIRIAN RELATIONS FOLLOWING ROVING AMBASSADOR'S LENGEMA'S
LATEST VISIT TO LUSAKA. LENGEMA MET WITH PRESIDENT KAUNDA
MORNING OF APRIL 26. CONVERSATION WAS CORDIAL AND COVERED
BOMBING INCIDENT, PETROLEUM SUPPLIES FOR SHABA AND REFUGEES.
LENGEMA RENEWED HIS ASSURANCES THAT MOBUTU SINCERELY OFFERED
APOLOGIES FOR THE BOMBING. KAUNDA DID NOT REACT. ON REFUGEES,
PARTIES AGREED TO KEEP EACH OTHER INFORMED AS TO THE SERIOUS-
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NESS OF THE PROBLEM. KAUNDA SAID HE HAD ONE ESTIMATE WHICH
HE WAS SEEKING TO VERIFY THAT ONE THOUSAND ZAIRIANS HAD CROSSED
OVER THE ZAMBIAN BORDER. HE ASKED LENGEMA FOR NO ASSISTANCE
IN CARING FOR THE REFUGEES. KAUNDA OFFERED ASSURANCES THAT
DELIVERIES OF OIL PRODUCTS WOULD CONTINUE BUT CAUTIONED LENGEMA
THAT ZAIRE SHOULD IMPORT THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE PRIOR TO THE END
OF MAY. NDOLA REFINERY WOULD BE CLOSED DOWN FOR A PERIOD FOR

NORMAL MAINTENANCE AT THAT TIME.

2. AFTERNOON OF APRIL 26, FOLLOWING LENGEMA'S DEPARTURE, ZAIRIAN AMBASSADOR WAS CALLED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND TOLD BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY THAT STATE HOUSE WANTED A MESSAGE PASSED TO MOBUTU. MESSAGE WAS THAT PRESIDENT KAUNDA WISHED MOBUTU PUBLICLY TO ADMIT THAT HE HAD BEEN WRONG IN BLAMING THE RUSSIANS FOR THE BOMBING OF ZAMBIAN TERRITORY AND THAT IN FACT THE BOMBING HAD BEEN DONE BY ZAIRIAN AIR-CRAFT.

3. ZAIRIAN DCM TOLD EMBOFF THAT KAUNDA'S DEMAND, IN HIS ESTIMATION, COULD LEAD TO A SHARP DETERIORATION IN ZAMBIAN-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS. MOBUTU COULD NOT RETRACT HIS STATEMENT ABOUT THE RUSSIANS BECAUSE IT WAS PART OF THE RATIONALE HE HAD USED IN ASKING FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, KAUNDA WANTED A RETRACTION TO PROVE TO HIS BODY POLITIC THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DID NOT TAKE VIOLATIONS OF ZAMBIAN TERRITORY LYING DOWN.

4. IN AN ASIDE ZAIRIAN DCM SAID THAT TO MAKE MATTERS MORE DIFFICULT THE BOMBING OF ZAMBIA HAD NOT BEEN AN ERROR. OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF FALSE INTELLIGENCE, INDICATING THAT THERE WAS A CONCENTRATION OF KATANGAN GENDARME ON THE ZAMBIAN SIDE OF THE ZAIRE-ZAMBIA BORDER, ZAIRIAN PILOTS HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO HIT THE ILELENGE AREA.

COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW HOW ACCURATE THE ZAIRIAN DCM'S INFORMATION ABOUT THE DELIBERATE NATURE OF THE BOMBING OF
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ZAMBIAN TERRITORY IS, BUT HE SPOKE WITH CONVICTION AND APPARENTLY HAD ACCESS TO INSIDE INFORMATION. WE SHARE HIS CONCERN THAT KAUNDA'S DEMAND THAT MOBUTU ISSUE A RETRACTION COULD POSE A PROBLEM FOR ZAIRIAN-ZAMBIAN RELATIONS. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT KAUNDA REALLY EXPECTS MOBUTU TO MAKE A PUBLIC RETRACTION OF HIS EARLIER STATEMENTS. A FORMULA SAVING FACE FOR BOTH PARTIES MAY WELL BE WORKED OUT. THE ZAMBIANS COULD BE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK TO CUT BACK ON PETROLEUM SHIPMENTS OR OTHERWISE APPLY PRESSURE TO DEESCALATE THE SHABA FIGHTING.
LOW

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NNN

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